



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

March 30, 2022

The Honorable Sen Dolores Kelly
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building - Room 3 East Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Re: SUPPORT HB 1171, Letter of Support from American Atheists regarding legislation that protects patients' medical care from politicians' religious views

Dear Chairperson Kelly and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

As a Maryland resident and national field director for American Atheists, which has nearly 1,100 constituents in Maryland, I thank you for considering HB 1171, a bill that protects reproductive freedom, including the right to an abortion, in Maryland. While many states around the country rush to pass controversial bills that put politicians between patients and the doctors who provide their care, it is more important than ever that Maryland codifies its commitment to reproductive freedom. We urge you to pass this important bill.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the "wall of separation" between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation's communities and where casual bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for the health, safety, and well-being of all Americans, American Atheists supports efforts to protect medical care from the religious beliefs of politicians and others.

Polls consistently show that more than 6 in 10 Americans support legal access to abortion.¹ In Maryland, the Pew Research Center reports that 64% of adults believe that abortion should be

¹ Pew Research Center. (2019). Public Opinion on Abortion, 1995-2019. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/>.

available in all or most cases.² Despite this widespread support, many states are attempting to advance measure to criminalize abortion providers, restrict or ban access to health care, and create a disturbing database to track information about women obtaining abortion care. These bills are not about protecting women's health and well-being. They are about imposing a religious agenda on everyone else. In this dangerous landscape for Americans seeking reproductive care, Maryland has the opportunity to affirm its commitment to reproductive freedom and protection for those seeking care.

The Maryland legislature understands that politicians have no place in the private lives of patients. Patients faced with difficult decisions need to have the ability to decide the type of compassionate care that is best for their family and their beliefs, just as they would be allowed to do at any other point in their child's life. HB 1171 codifies the right of patients to seek the care they need.

We strongly support HB 1171 because it protects the private lives of pregnant people and the doctors who care for them. We urge you to adopt this important bill. If you should have any questions regarding American Atheists' support for HB 1171 ,American Atheists State Policy Manager, at bparker@atheists.org.

Sincerely,



Samantha McGuire
National Field Director
American Atheists

² Pew Research Center. (2020). Do state laws on abortion reflect public opinion? Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/01/21/do-state-laws-on-abortion-reflect-public-opinion/>.